

Miami Springs Combats Whitefly Invasion with Lady Bugs

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MIAMI SPRINGS, FL – The City of Miami Springs has been experiencing an infestation of Central American invaders. These unwelcome immigrants are whiteflies, tiny snowflake-sized cousins of the aphid, who are known for their predatory eating habits. Mortal enemies to landscape-minded homeowners, whitefly adults pierce the veins of plants with their needle-sharp mouth parts and suck up the sappy juices. They then secrete a viscous sugary slime called “honeydew” that attracts other insects, turns into a sooty black mold, and sticks to automobiles and sidewalks. In our warm tropical conditions, they are thriving, and the females are laying up to 300 eggs every two weeks.

Fortunately, Miami Springs is a “Tree City USA” and our Public Works Department is ever-vigilant in protecting our trees and plants from being defoliated and devoured! Rather than treating this infestation with commercial pesticides, our City Arborist Tom Nash is armed with an equally effective natural remedy – ladybugs! Early in the morning, before dawn this week, Tom fearlessly released 22,500 hungry ladybugs in 15 locations throughout the City. Hopefully, they are having a wonderful feast.

Other non-toxic solutions residents may use to combat whiteflies in their yards include mixing one tablespoon of dishwashing liquid to one gallon of water and spraying it on infested areas (including houses, trees, plants, shrubs and house plants) two to three times a week. Also, whiteflies cannot stand the smell of nasturtiums or marigolds, so planting a border of these will help drive them away.

Let Public Works (305.805.5170) know if your whitefly problem is overwhelming, and happy gardening!

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